

Focus Lessons

DIRECTIONS: Read the following passage about a girl who volunteers for after-school work and gets in a little over her head. Then answer the questions that follow.

- 1 I pride myself on being responsible. I make my bed as soon as I get up every day. I always hand my homework assignments in on time and I do household chores every Saturday.
- 2 One Saturday, Mrs. Callan, the next-door neighbor, approached me while I was taking out the garbage. "Jana, you're so responsible," she said, "how would you like to babysit our daughter tonight? We can pay you five dollars an hour."
- 3 "Sure," I told her. I had lots of experience babysitting my own little sister. "What time do you want me to come over?"
- 4 We arranged a time and when Mrs. Callan left, I was humming to myself, thinking about the extra money I would make.
- 5 I was still humming as I started my next chore—mowing the front lawn. I was so busy humming that I jumped when Mr. Shullman, another neighbor, tapped me on the shoulder. I turned off the mower so I could hear him speak. "Jana," he said, "you're so responsible. How would you like to walk Rusty this weekend? We're going out of town and the dog needs to go out twice a day. He also needs someone to give him food and water. We can pay you six dollars a day. Are you interested?"
- 6 "Sure," I told Mr. Shullman, doing a quick calculation in my head. Between babysitting and walking the dog, I could earn enough money to buy a new Walkman.
- 7 Mr. Shullman gave me an extra set of house keys and detailed instructions.
- 8 I was about to start up the mower again when Miss Wilson came over from across the street. "Jana," she said, "you're such a responsible young lady. I know that I can trust you to water my rose bushes while I'm visiting my mother. I'll be gone two weeks so I can give you twenty dollars for the work."
- 9 "That's great," I told her, though my thoughts were racing. How was I going to water the rose bushes, walk Rusty, and babysit—not to mention finish my homework?
- 10 "What should I do?" I asked my mother. "I promised I'd help, but I don't think I can do all those things."
- 11 "A promise is a promise," my mother told me. "But your schoolwork is a priority. You do your homework and the babysitting. I'll walk Rusty and your brother can water Miss Wilson's rose bushes."
- 12 "I'm sorry," I told her. "I wanted to be responsible."
- 13 "You are responsible," she said, smiling. "Sometimes though, being responsible means knowing your limits."

Focus Lessons

1. Identify the setting of the story and recount the plot.

2. How does the author dramatize the plot and make this story interesting to the reader? List at least one main way.

3. What is the main idea or theme of this story? Explain it in a few sentences.

